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AN INDIAN [illegible]

A LETTER

TO

THE MARQUIS OF HARTINGTON

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA

IN A [illegible] AND REFORMING GOVERNMENT

'No man can better serve his fellow-countrymen at the present juncture than by endeavouring to inform them about Indian affairs.'—SIR ARTHUR [illegible], *Member of the Supreme Council of India*.

'There can be no doubt whatever that the excessive influence of zemindars (landholders) and tieedars (village speculators), has ground the ryots (farmers) of Behar down to a state of extreme depression and misery. . . . It is this great curse of Behar mainly which makes the ryots of the richest province of Bengal the poorest and most wretched class we find in the country.'—The Hon. SIR ASHLEY EDEN, *Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal*.

THE POPULATION OF [illegible] TWENTY MILLIONS.

BEHAR WAS THE SCENE OF THE GREAT 'FAMINE' OF 1874.

SECOND EDITION

LONDON

C. KEGAN PAUL & CO.

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THE

RUIN OF AN INDIAN PROVINCE

AN INDIAN FAMINE EXPLAINED

A LETTER

TO

THE MARQUIS OF HARTINGTON

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA

IN A LIBERAL AND REFORMING GOVERNMENT

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'No man can better serve his fellow-countrymen at the present juncture than by helping to inform them about Indian affairs'—SIR ARTHUR HOBHOUSE, *ex-Member of the Supreme Council of India*

'There can be no doubt whatever that the combined influence of zemindars (landlords) and ticcadars (land speculators) has ground the ryots (farmers) of Behar down to a state of extreme depression and misery. . . . It is this great curse of Behar mainly which makes the ryots of the richest province of Bengal the poorest and most wretched class we find in the country'—The Hon. SIR ASTLEY EDEN, *Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal*

THE POPULATION OF BEHAR IS TWENTY MILLIONS
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1880

THE

RUIN OF AN INDIAN PROVINCE.

My Lord,—During the few months that preceded the late General Elections two Indian officials addressed to the English public statements which have not unnaturally been connected with an intention to place the late Government, in regard to Indian affairs, in the best position before the eyes of the constituencies about to exercise within a short period their electoral privileges. The Budget of Sir John Strachey is the chief of the statements to which I refer. Its value has been ascertained with a result that has caused widespread pain and uneasiness. The way for the Finance Minister's extraordinary estimates was, however, made smooth by another official. The public mind had been first prepared to receive an optimist budget by means of the optimist speeches of the Indian Director-General of Statistics, in which he dilated on the general happiness and prosperity of our great empire of Hindustan.

It will be remembered how great was the importance attached by the then Governmental press to the lectures of Dr. Hunter, and with what a strange ecstasy of exultation and encomium a certain section of public opinion rewarded the utterances of a gentleman of exceptionally narrow Indian experience and exceptionally small Indian repute. It is a peculiarity of this section that it is ever claiming to speak on behalf of the whole nation, and, in so doing, often succeeds in insulting what is honestest and best in the English character.

It also professes to believe itself to be conspicuously humble, and, in the spirit of such ostentatious humility, is always proclaiming its self-depreciative qualities. In reviewing Dr. Hunter's lectures, the *Times* assures us that 'Englishmen are fond of self-depreciation. They like to proclaim their faults and shortcomings in exaggerated terms. Their love of grumbling is apt to take the form of wholesale unjust condemnation of all the work of their hands. In nothing is this curious weakness shown more strikingly than in regard to our Indian empire.' Most educated and self-respecting Englishmen, and, I fear, all other races, are inclined to regard such language as the most awkward form in which an excess of stolid vanity can betray itself. Self-admiration of this kind, however, ungainly though it is, bears a not unforgivable character, if unaccompanied by an offensive rejection of honest criticism. Such, unfortunately, is rarely the case. In the article from which I quote, the leading journal did not hesitate to include the honoured name of John Bright in a sweeping condemnation of 'puerile calumnies' and 'reckless calumniators.' I apologise, my Lord, for recalling these unbecoming expressions, which, it is probable, have escaped your memory and perhaps your notice. In doing so, I only desire to draw your attention to the vindictive opprobrium which inevitably awaits critics of Indian administration, less distinguished and less able to disregard such treatment than the Right Hon. Member for Birmingham. If I venture to risk this opprobrium, it is with the hope that I may render to the cause of good government in India a service more real than any flattery of national self-complacency could effect.

The greatest danger we in India have to fear, is that it may come to be believed by the English people that their most important dependency is so well and ably governed as to do away with the need of careful supervision on their part. This is a misfortune that is specially to be deprecated, because of the fact that there is no part of Her Majesty's dominions in which

Englishmen of all classes are so capable of forming a judgment unwarped by interest, prejudice, or bigotry. I have associated too long with English Liberals to be ignorant of the thoroughness of their desire to govern India well; but I share the fear, common to most well-wishers of that country, that a sentiment so honourable to England is much too liable to slumber in an ill-founded confidence in high officials. Neither am I blind to the benefits that a strong dominant power has been able to confer. Irishmen, whose memories of British rule are amongst the darkest in history; and the nations of Europe, with a strangled and dismembered Poland as a *chef d'œuvre* of conquest to judge by—can hardly believe what benefits foreign dominion brought to a country torn, as India was last century, by the feuds of dozen warring races and a dozen militant creeds. I give gladly to the English governors of India the credit of having, in the past, saved 180 millions of people from all the miseries of anarchy; of having, for the most part, preserved the old Indian aristocracy in more than its ancestral affluence; of being the generous guardians of every form of religious belief; of having exerted their best legal wisdom to protect the weak against the strong; and of having devoted millions of rupees to the education of the youth of all classes, from Rajkumárs in Rajputáná to cowherd lads in Bengal. At the same time I reject with all my reason the obstinate blindness that refuses to recognise that in India a hundred reforms are pressing menacingly for solution, and that the present form of Indian Government is utterly out of tune with the time and its requirements. In India itself no one can mix with educated Europeans, including the official class,[1] without hearing a distressed murmur passing round that

[1] This feeling is well shown in a poem by Mr. H. G. Keene, C.S., Judge of Agra—an officer whose career has been considered worthy of a record in a volume of Indian and Colonial biographies lately published under the title of *Pillars of the Empire*.

'What has your civilisation done for the people here?
Has it made them prosper!—or poorer, think you, year by year!
Skulking in rotten cabins, like foul and famished ghosts,
While you live at Simla, *concocting statistics* and well-paid posts.'

things are not as they should be. Even when Government and the individuals that constitute it get the fullest credit for good intention, it is felt that India is becoming too civilised and too thoroughly imbued with Western ideas to remain contented with the half-paternal, half-bureaucratic, but most superficially informed system of administration that, from some narrow council-chamber in Calcutta or Simla, governs with more than the despotism of a Cæsar.

It would be no impossible task to prove that Indian progress, such as it is, has not been attained without much cruel suffering on the part of our native subjects, and that from various causes English government has in some instances inflicted an amount of misery that is almost incredible. The condition of the agricultural classes in Bombay will immediately present itself to your mind. Permit me to lay before you a description of that condition as given in the pages of a journal the most favourable in India to every form of Governmental action. The *Pioneer* in 1877 felt that any further cloaking of the facts and causes of agrarian discontent in Bombay fell not far short of the act of a disloyal citizen, and that it was wise and necessary and just to tell the truth and the whole truth. Its vigorous, candid language in this instance is an honour to Anglo-Indian journalism.

'Worried by the revenue survey,' it wrote, 'for *heavily enhanced public payments*, enslaved by his private creditor, dragged into court only to have imposed upon him the intolerable burden of fresh decrees, without even the resource of flight which was open to his forefathers before the kindred scourge of Holkar, the Deccan ryot accepted, for the third of a century, with characteristic patience and silence, the yoke of British misgovernment. For thirty years, as we now learn from the papers published, he had been at once the scandal and the anxiety of his masters. Report upon report had been written upon him; shelf upon shelf in the public offices groaned under the story of his wrongs. If any one doubts the naked accuracy

of these words, let him dip into the pages of Appendix A (papers on the indebtedness of the agricultural classes in Bombay). *A more damning indictment was never recorded against a civilised Government.* From 1844 to 1874, successive Administrations have been appealed to, have been warned, or have been urged. Each, in its turn, has replied—as the present will doubtless answer to the late Committee's importunities—with a suave sigh of *non possumus.* The hospitalities of Dapooree or Ganeshkhind (the palaces of the Bombay Governor) have for thirty years been lavished in graceful and generous profusion; while the ryot, who paid for them, lay hard by in enforced and ruinous idleness, a debtor in the Poona gaol; or ate at their gates, in the field of which the fruits had once been his own, the bitter bread of slavery.' It is true that this seems the language of exaggeration; yet, after making every allowance for the influence of a just indignation, it is impossible to assert that the history of this century presents many more fearful pictures of maladministration by a European nation than does this paragraph from one of the most Conservative journals in the Empire. 'So,' it continues, 'the survey officers (of the land revenue) came and went, *adding each his thousands and tens of thousands to the public assessments.* Marwaris (money-lenders) swarmed up, in ever-increasing flights, from the far north-west, and settled down on the devoted acres. Honourable Justices visited India, to carry off after a while to their homes, also, some trifle from the ryot's hands, leaving him in exchange their precedents and their rulings; leaving also, in a thousand desolate homesteads, a monument, to those who sought it, of the wisdom of the system over which (always, of course, at the ryot's expense) it had been their pleasure to preside. Decrees of the courts flew like arrow-flights into the thickest of the population, striking down the tallest and the most notable. *Stupidity, blindness, indifference, greed—inability, in a word, in all its thousand forms—settled down, like the fabled harpies, on the ryot's bread, and bore off with them all that he subsisted upon.*

Then, at last, in spite of his marvellous forbearance, Jacques Bonhomme could stand it no longer. Long-suffering in every land, the patience in India of the *misera contribuens plebs* is especially proverbial. Conversely, in India of all other countries, are agricultural movements dangerous.' It may well be wonderingly asked, Can it be possible that the highly civilised Government of England in the nineteenth century can have reduced a great Indian province to that worst extremity of peasant misery which has made the great French social war of the fourteenth century a byword for criminal maladministration? Truly and piteously did Sir George Wingate, a distinguished Bombay officer, exclaim: 'What must be the state of things which can compel cultivators, proverbially patient and long-suffering, accustomed to more or less of ill-usage and injustice at all times, to redress their wrongs by murder, and in defiance of an ignominious death to themselves? How must their sense of justice have been violated? How must they have been bereft of all hope of redress from law or Government before their patient and peaceful natures could be roused to the point of desperation required for such a deed?' 'It is difficult,' adds the *Pioneer*, 'to read these sentences without something like a curse on the system of *laisser aller* which drove the Kumbi from his fields to his only effective form of argument, without something like fiery anger at the Government which has replied, once and for all, to his pleading, by thrusting him into a gaol.' I very much question if Turkish misrule—omitting the more vulgar forms of barbarous oppression, such as personal violence and insult—has ever been condemned in terms more scathing.

You are aware, my Lord, that a kind of anti-usury law was passed last year by the Council of the late Viceroy, Lord Lytton, for the relief of the Bombay ryots at the expense of their native creditors, on the ground that their ruin was brought about by the greed and dishonesty of native money-lenders. This, my Lord, is the official view, but the inaccurate one. If we can believe official papers of the highest authenticity, taxa-

tion and *over-taxation*—grinding, merciless, incredible—was the cause, and almost the sole cause. The Marwari came to Bombay because Government made the presence of a money-lender a necessity. For years, indeed, the Marwari succeeded in staving off the final collapse of the ryot, but even he found it impossible to meet the drain of ever-increasing taxes. He will have his reward to the full, Government having declared irrecoverable much of the money he lent to pay its own revenue. Will it not be said that our Legislature is thus proceeding to ruin the merchant class, of which the Marwaris form the richest and most enterprising section, after our revenue system has beggared its constituents? Can we wonder if all native India cries out that an act of spoliation has been added to many acts of misgovernment?[1] Is resentment unnatural under these circumstances on the part of the Bombay people, when Government poses as a kind of beneficent Providence interfering to save a lazy and improvident peasantry from the unscrupulous knavery of their brethren of the town?

The evidence of these facts is perfect. When the Deccan disturbances of 1877 enforced the application of some intelligent attention, the Supreme Government appointed a Commission to inquire into the disorder, consisting of one judge, two revenue officials from the North-Western Provinces, and two revenue officials from Bombay. Only the first three can be regarded as independent; the two latter being subordinate to the Bombay Government, whose administration was substantially on its trial. The *Pioneer* briefly describes the result of their inquiries. 'Of the five members of the Committee, three' (the independent members), 'namely, the judicial and the two North-West members, reply that it ("the final element of distress that broke the

[1] The *Hindoo Patriot* of November 10, 1879, remarks: 'The rigid collection of Government assessment drives the ryot into the arms of the money-lender, and then the Government confiscates the property of the creditor and relieves the ryot; which is just and enlightened legislation indeed!' This journal is unquestionably the leading organ of native opinion, and is edited by the Hon. Krishna Das Pal, C.I.E., the able and accomplished Bengali member of the Bengal Legislative Council.

ryots' heart") must be looked for in the revised *land revenue assessments*, in themselves *extravagantly heavy*.' It continues: 'The arguments of the majority, taken together, form a grave indictment against the Bombay Revenue Survey. Briefly they may be thus summarised: The enhancements made at the recent revision were, judged by all known standards, *excessive*. Viewed in conjunction with the status of those on whom they were imposed, they were *ruinous*. They were framed, finally, for the most part on conjectural and merely arithmetical data, much of which seems wrong. As to the excessiveness of the assessments, it is shown on the Survey figures that the enhancement, as imposed originally, ranged in different talukas' (sub-districts) 'from 33 to 66 per cent. On individual villages it was often *doubled*; on individual holdings it was *constantly more than doubled*.' English and Irish landlords, during the prevailing agricultural distress, have justly been rewarded by the gratitude of their tenantry and the commendation of the public for rent reductions rarely exceeding 25 per cent. What shall we say of the Bombay Government with its cent. per cent. enhancements—its extravagantly heavy land taxation—its excessive land taxation—its ruinous land taxation? 'The assessment,' we learn, 'is judged from its own mouth; and we find it imposing enhancements of 38 per cent. in the face of admitted depression, or forcing 77 per cent. down the throats of the local officers.' It is always thus in India. The almost all-redeeming feature of maladministration is that it is ever battled against loyally and often successfully by brave-hearted Englishmen, whose local experience and sympathies have not been blinded and blunted by the so-called necessities of finance. Indeed, I would venture to say that there are few countries where officials have risked more than in India for the sake of the truth that is distasteful in high quarters. 'These very heavy enhancements,' add the independent members of the Commission, 'are the more unfortunate, because they have been caused in great measure by previous errors in the Survey itself.' 'Whatever the benefit to the

Exchequer,' continues the *Pioneer*, 'the blow to the cultivating classes must be staggering. When, for instance, Colonel Francis, *le cœur leger*, speaks of an increase of 53 per cent. upon a "drought-stricken district like Indapur" (the mood, the words, and their sequence are his own), or when, conceding to a collector (the chief executive officer of a district) that "77 *per cent. is a large increase*," he is nevertheless compelled to impose it *in the lump*, one cannot but feel that the shock to the body agricultural must be, to say the least of it, *vital*. Similarly, Colonel Waddington finds, in another taluka (sub-district), that "the condition of the people does not show that improvement which might have been fairly expected;" but as an increase of 38 per cent. seems to him, by his calculations, expedient, he has no choice but to demand it at once.'

The Earl of Beaconsfield, in his novel of 'Coningsby,' holds up to merited derision the old pre-reform Conservative Government 'under whose genial influence the order of the peasantry, "a country's pride," has vanished from the face of the land, and is succeeded by a race of serfs, who are called labourers and who burn ricks.' It might be an interesting question whether a vernacular newspaper that translated this passage with special application to the condition of affairs in the Bombay Presidency would render itself liable to State prosecution under the Press Act.

Many of the foregoing facts are within the knowledge of Englishmen who have devoted some attention to Indian affairs during the past few years. I recall them as a warning to English statesmen, that they may pause before they give credence to official vapourings like those of Dr. Hunter. I also desire to remind the English people that the tale of misgovernment and baffled reform which it is my special object to lay before them through you, my Lord, is neither unusual in occurrence nor improbable in fact.[1]

[1] The following passage from the *Englishman* of February 17, 1880, shows how widely spread are the charges connecting the late famine in Southern

There is no part of India better known to Englishmen of the present generation than the province of Behar, the scene of the great so-called famine of 1874. It is certainly a tract deserving of attention, and the possession of which alone would form a splendid dominion. Exceeding Portugal in area, it is thronged by a population equal to that of the whole kingdom of Prussia, including Hanover. Its name, said to mean the land of spring, proclaims its generally pleasant and salubrious climate, which, even at the most-dreaded period of an Indian summer, may be described as the most endurable mean between the fierce torrid heats of Delhi and the stagnant vapour-bath that envelops Calcutta. It is hard to exaggerate the fertility of this favoured region. Unlike Bengal, which depends for the most part on a single crop—the great rice harvest of the winter, the failure of which must entail famine—Behar is protected from such a calamity by three equally important harvests in spring, autumn, and winter, consisting of wheat, barley, pulses, rice, greater and lesser millets, and Indian corn, besides sugar-cane and poppy.

It has been my good fortune to have spent most of my service in this garden of India. My first acquaintance with it

India with increased land taxation: 'The late Madras Famine has raised the question as to what the Government has done to protect the agriculture of Southern India, in return for the revenue raised from it. On the one hand, there can be no doubt that the Madras revenue has been very greatly increased since India passed to the Crown. In that year, 1858–59, the land revenue of Madras was under 3¼ millions sterling, and its average during the previous five years had been under 3½ millions. In 1876, the year before the late famine, it was 4½ millions; and this may be taken as its lowest average at the present time, excluding seasons of dearth. Twenty years of British rule have, therefore, increased the Government demand upon the agriculture of Madras by over one million, or one third of the whole land revenue paid by that Presidency to the Company in 1858. *There are not wanting those who affirm that this increased taxation had much to do with the late calamity.* The husbandmen were less able, according to this view, to bear the strain of bad seasons in consequence of the *enormous increase* in the revenue taken from them.'

I am unable to corroborate this opinion or to examine the improbable official explanation that the new taxation is levied from fresh additions to the cultivated area. There has been no independent Commission in Madras to bring to light cent. per cent. enhancements on old-established holdings.

was derived from a careful study of the circumstances that gave rise to the disaster of 1874. Nothing seemed to me more certain, as the result of that study, than that drought or failure of crops was not the cause of the so-called famine. A thorough examination of rainfall tables established beyond doubt the fact that the rains of 1873 were little short of a fair average, and that the crops that form the ordinary food of the people yielded fair average outturns in that year. Especially was it evident that rice, which alone had failed, was not the food of the poor. The means of ascertaining the real source of the perennial misery of Behar was placed within my reach in the following year. In February, 1875, I was appointed Assistant-Director-General of Statistics, and it became portion of my duty to compile statistical accounts of three great Behar districts; and I did so working neither in Calcutta, nor Simla, nor Edinburgh, but in the very districts I was employed in statistically examining. My reports on them form Vols. XIV. and XV. of the Statistical Account of Bengal, which bears Dr. Hunter's name. These three districts—Bhaugalpore, Monghyr, and Purneah—have a total area of 13,147 square miles and a population of 5,153,871 persons. Since the completion of this duty in the middle of 1876, I have been employed in three other large Behar districts—Chumparun, Gaya, and Sarun—the portions of which, under my immediate executive supervision in 1877–79, as a magistrate exercising first-class powers, have a total area of 6,584 square miles and a population of three millions. I believe I am justified in claiming an intimate acquaintance with Behar.

When Behar is nowadays mentioned, its name usually calls to mind little but the fact that one of the most fertile tracts in India has become notorious as the scene of frequent famines, and that its inhabitants, naturally a robust and healthy people, are among the most poverty-stricken and least happy subjects of the Empire. This unsatisfactory state of things is attributable to three main causes. These are (1) the rack-renting

of their tenantry by the landlords, who farm out the rent-collections of their estates in parcels to speculating middlemen on short leases, each parcel usually consisting of a village with the lands attached; (2) the mismanagement by Government, as Court of Wards of the vast estates of the minor Maharajas of Durbhunga and Hutwa, the two greatest landholders of Behar, and the disastrous example and encouragement thereby given to the worst malpractices of the landlords; and (3) the eviction and oppression of the farmers by European adventurers for the purpose of indigo-planting, often with the support of officials of the highest local position.

Before entering into a detailed account of the evils of Behar, it may be well to draw attention to the fact that their existence has been again and again pressed on the notice of Government during the past fifteen years. It is true that they escaped animadversion till the famine of 1865–66 brought them to the public knowledge with painful distinctness. Bengal herself had been grievously neglected during the second quarter of this century; and, even after the establishment of a separate local Government at Calcutta in 1854 for the three Lower Provinces, the great central province of Bengal supplied an amount of executive work which left very little time for the consideration of the affairs of Behar and Orissa. As Sir George Campbell wrote in 1873: 'It has been said that in Bengal the rich and powerful have been less restrained, and the poor less protected, than in other provinces, and up to that time this was so in the most literal sense of the word. There was in the interior of Bengal *a lawlessness and high-handed defiance of authority* by people who took the law into their own hands by open violence, which would not have been tolerated for a moment in another part of India.' (This applies chiefly to European indigo-planters.) 'It required all the energies of the first Lieutenant-Governor to deal with these and other patent evils; and it may be said that the government of the second Lieutenant-Governor was a continued struggle with questions arising out of past

lawlessness and affecting important interests which suffered by the transition from the old-fashioned state of things to a rule of law and order.' These great domestic difficulties existed with at least as much gravity of crime and disorder in Behar; but, above all, the crying misfortune of the province was that in an even more unhappy degree it was true that the rich and powerful were unrestrained and the poor unprotected. The famine of 1866 was a violent awakening; but, unfortunately for Behar, the greater calamity that fell upon Orissa distracted attention from the condition of the northern province, and from the ingrained and perennial evils that have long outlived the effects of drought and starvation. Still from this time the feeling first began to take root in the official mind in high quarters that things were not at all well in Behar. Ten years have since passed away; another 'famine' has come to prove the incapability of the people to endure the partial failure of the crops of a single year; some seven hundred lakhs of rupees have been spent in its relief; officials of every grade have depicted the misery and poverty to which the people of Behar have sunk; non-official warnings also have not been wanting; and yet it cannot be said that anything practically beneficial has been effected.

The evidence before Government in regard to the condition of the Behar peasantry is of the most credible, though startling, description. It is supplied by Commissioners and District Magistrates, and is repeated even in the resolutions and minutes of successive Lieutenant-Governors. Sir George Campbell made some effort to grapple with the difficulty. He collected accurate information and called for special reports on the subject. Officers were required to give marked attention to the relations of landlord and tenant, and the condition of the agricultural classes in their annual administration reports. It was then that Sir Stewart Bayley, as Commissioner of the Patna division, declared that 'the *traditional oppression* ever used towards the ryots is really of the most *grinding* nature in many parts.' Entering more into particulars, the same officer added: 'Taking the

districts south of the Ganges first, I have in the subdivisional officers' reports a series of the strongest and most sensational descriptions of the *poverty and misery* of the ryot. It is strange to find from the two neighbouring subdivisions of Behar and Nowada similarly strong denunciations of the oppression habitually exercised by the zemindar towards the poorer class of ryot, and of the wretched condition of the latter, when we consider that one of these subdivisional officers is a Bengali Brahmin and the other a Muhamadan of Behar, who speaks of a system with which he must have been familiar from his youth.' 'A cultivator not in debt,' writes a Shahabad officer, 'is viewed with dislike and suspicion, and debt is their common burden. Fifty per cent. of the cultivators are in debt for grain lent by their landlords, and forty per cent. are in debt to mahajans (village merchants and bankers) for either grain or money. The latter section consists of men of some substance who can command credit; but the former are of the poorer class cultivators, and the grasp of the landlord on them is firm and unrelaxing.' The Collector of Sarun adds his testimony thus: 'The zamindars, whenever they have a substantial share in a village, are, as a rule, *oppressive*; and on the estates of many of the larger zamindars, perhaps, the least consideration for the tenantry is shown.' Sir George Campbell himself declared: 'Nowhere have the rents of a peaceable, industrious, and submissive population been more screwed up than in Bhagulpore. It was the same action of the zamindars that was leading to *rebellion* in the Sonthal pergunnahs.'

It is the honest belief of the English people that their conquest of India is vindicated by the improved material comfort and security that their Government insures to its subjects as compared with the injustices and harassments so frequently attributed to native States. This justification, which might have been a glorious truth, is, I fear, rapidly ceasing to be possible. The Chief Magistrate of the great district of Purneah found reason for arriving at a very different and very dis-

heartening conclusion. In the words of Sir George Campbell: 'The result of Mr. Kemble's inquiries on the Nepaul frontier is discouraging, in that, after *very fairly* weighing the respective advantages and disadvantages of both, he comes to the conclusion that *the condition of the Nepaul ryot (peasant) is on the whole better than that of the British ryot.* Although the smaller rent taken from the former by the Nepaulese Government is supplemented by forced labour and the purveyance system, on the other hand the illegal cesses and exactions of zamindars, middlemen, &c., and other vexations, turn the scale against the British cultivator.' I would venture to commend the study and explanation of this passage to those Jingoist gentlemen who have of late been so open-eyed to the shortcomings of native administration in the other sub-Himalayan Kingdom of Cashmere.

Succeeding years brought to light new instances of landlord oppression in Behar; but the succeeding Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Richard Temple, was much too worldly-wise to publish them too widely. Sir Richard Temple has reached the eminence he has because he has always been master of roseate report-writing. One might invite the attention of the *Times* to his career as some contradiction of its theory of self-depreciative Englishmen. Everything was good that was the work of his hands or had the benefit of his administration. Yet even the author of the glowing pages that, rising above the common fate of dry-as-dust official reports, are known to fame as the 'Punjab Romances,' was forced to admit that 'undoubtedly the condition of the peasantry is low in Behar—lower than that of any other peasantry, with equal natural advantages, in any province in which Sir Richard Temple has been in India.' 'A *system of rack-renting* prevails in some parts of the division; the zemindáris (great estates) are let either wholly or in part to farmers or lessees, who are thus middlemen, standing between the landowners and the actual cultivators of the soil. It is reported that the object of the rent-receivers is to exact from

the ryots as much profit as they can.' 'Rents, including therein the innumerable cesses by which they are supplemented, are limited in the case of the majority of agriculturists by little else than *their inability to pay more.*' Sir Richard Temple, however, *did* nothing; and these unpleasant but necessary admissions were speedily lost to sight in a mist of hopeful views and specious phrases. He went soon afterwards to Bombay; and the legislation his influence brought about there has already been described, and is worthy of his policy in Behar.

The late Governor of Bombay fortunately left as his successor in Bengal a man of masculine strength of character, of wide Bengal experience, but especially a man with a reputation for hitting straight at a wrong when he had convinced himself of its evil nature. Sir Ashley Eden assumed in 1877 the direction of public affairs in Bengal, and, within the first few months of his government, we meet with sentences like the following in the resolutions issuing from his secretariat: 'The majority of the zemindars (landlords) in Tirhoot are unfavourably mentioned, being described as *grasping* and *oppressive* to their tenantry.' 'In the present report of the Commissioner of the Bhaugalpore division, a lamentable account is given by the subdivisional officer of the state of things in the Banka subdivision; two-thirds of which are leased out in farms to non-resident speculators, while in the remaining one-third at least half of the landlords also are non-resident. The farms run usually for seven years, and are only renewed on the payment of a heavy and increasing premium, which falls entirely on the ryots. *The tenants are said to have no rights, to be subject to the exaction of forced labour, to illegal distraint, and to numerous illegal cesses,* while the collections are made by an unscrupulous host of up-country peadahs (bailiffs of the fierce races of Northern Hindustan). There can be no doubt whatever that the combined influence of zemindars and ticcadars (land-speculators) *has ground the ryots of Behar down to a state of extreme depression and misery.*'

Nor did Sir Ashley Eden confine himself merely to minute-writing as his predecessors did. He took advantage of the great bathing festival held in November, 1877, at Sonepore, on the Ganges, opposite Patna, with its accompanying fair for natives and race-meeting for Europeans, to address to the nobles and zemindars of Behar, in durbar assembled, a speech that was then believed to be an executive ultimatum. 'It seems to me,' he said, 'that the time has come when Government must come forward and endeavour to take substantial measures for ameliorating the condition of the Behar peasantry.' The Lieutenant-Governor had then occupied for nearly a year the high position which he still holds; and he declared that, having devoted much attention to Behar administration, he had come to the conclusion that it was his clear duty to interfere on behalf of the tenantry of Behar, whom, in language of honest and temperate indignation, he described as '*poor, helpless, discontented men, driven about from village to village by the extortion of underlings or the exactions of irresponsible under-farmers*—tenants who never know whether they will possess next year the land they occupy this, and who feel that any attempt to grow more profitable crops will only end in increased demands from the ticcadar.' A short time before the delivery of this speech, in rebuking the evils of indigo-planting, as carried on by Europeans, he had denounced the farming system of holding land—known as the ticcadari system, on which their industry depends—as '*the Great Curse of Behar*;' adding: 'It is this mainly which makes *the ryots of the richest province of Bengal the poorest and most wretched class we find in the country.*'

There can be no doubt of the strength of the Lieutenant-Governor's belief that reform was urgently needed, and it only remains to ask what has become of the resolution which was stated with such force of conviction. The character of Sir Ashley Eden is sufficiently well known to refute the suspicion that his conclusions were hastily formed and as hastily aban-

doned. That he shirked his task as difficult and possibly unpopular is equally improbable. We must, therefore, seek for an explanation elsewhere; and this is to be, perhaps, found in a current and, it is believed, well-founded opinion that Behar land reform was dropped under instructions from the Government of India, and that Sir Ashley Eden, in spite of all the vigour of his pronouncements, found his hands tied by Lord Lytton, acting under influences, partly official and partly social, which are also very plainly designated.

It is only natural to suppose that Behar has not been degraded to its present deplorable condition without blame attaching somewhere; and it is unfortunately the most probable of facts that the examination of Behar administration during the past ten years would lead to reflections falling not far short of the gravest censure on some high-placed officials. It is also unfortunately the fact that, though possessed of a dozen qualities that fitted him for his high office, the late Viceroy is wanting in that vigour of character that can withstand the pressure of interested or prejudiced counsel, especially when enforced with all the resolute self-will that characterises successful Indian officials. The official in India succeeds very much more by force of will than by mere ability. Even in the more ordinary lines of official life, firmness alone protects him from failure; whilst, if he reaches the higher levels of office, the demands on his resolution and staunchness are immensely increased. It is hard if in his upward rise he has not been guilty of some fault of judgment or some error of administration, and unfortunately the Indian official of all orders is sensitive as a woman in regard to public criticism. Such an officer had peculiar advantages with an easy and kindly Viceroy like Lord Lytton, and thus it is that maladministration in Behar as well as in Bombay has been able to hide itself or to resist reform.

Still, in speaking of the Viceroy's character as less determined than might be desired, I should be sorry to corroborate the dictum attributed to a most distinguished member of the

present Cabinet, that Lord Lytton is wanting in every quality a Viceroy should possess. It is not improbable that under the ægis of a responsible Ministry he would have achieved a Vice-regal success as noticeable as that of Lord Dufferin in Canada. He has the same genial tact, the same capacity for selecting able assistants and binding them to his service by the ties of friendship. At the worst it may be said that he is not a master of men—and successful men—like Canning and Dalhousie. His appointment is specially remarkable as an evidence that the fact has not yet been appreciated in England, that, of all appointments under the Crown, that of Viceroy of India is the most difficult to fill, as well as the most responsible to hold. An English Premier, though supported by the voice of the country and the votes of both Houses of Parliament, often finds himself hampered by members of his Cabinet, men of mediocre ability though these often are, deriving their influence more frequently from wealth and birth than from any pre-eminent talent. One can imagine the position of an Indian Viceroy amongst strange scenes and strange customs, absolutely alone, and brought face to face with councillors holding the highest title to influence in their ability and their courage, with intellects and wills made firm by at least twenty years of arduous service.

How far the opinion is justified that the fear of exposure prevented Behar reform, is clearly a matter which it is impossible to accurately estimate. I can say that its existence is a certainty, and that, if true, it is a very unpleasant commentary on the incidents of personal government in India, which can subordinate the welfare of millions to the exigencies of an official reputation. I may also point out a few of the facts that give some probability to this view. One of the most important functions of Government is that which it exercises through the local commissioner as presiding judge of the Court of Wards. During the five years preceding the famine of 1874 this duty was one of peculiar importance in Behar, as during

most of that period it had to administer the great estates of the two minor Maharajas of Durbhunga and Hutwa, whose joint income is over £300,000 per annum, and the population of whose joint properties exceeds a million souls. Inquiries in connection with the famine poured a flood of light on Behar, and the mismanagement of the Durbhunga Raj early became a stock topic of reproach against the local government. The *Englishman* of Calcutta—the leading journal of the Indian metropolis—describes it in the following passage: 'The collection of rent has been effected in a manner calculated to entail the least possible amount of trouble on the managing officials, together with, we regret to say, *the greatest amount of mischief to the tenantry.* In Tirhoot, Durbhunga, and Monghyr, the ticcadari system has been followed; or, in other words, the land has been let out to irresponsible middlemen, who, in many cases, have specially contracted for a larger annual rent, in consideration of their receiving the sanction of the Raj to enhancing the rents of the subordinate tenants. The results have been *a most wholesale enhancement.* The rent-roll of the estate, which, in 1860, was 16 lakhs (£160,000) of rupees, has grown to 20 lakhs, and the tenantry are 18 lakhs in arrears.' It must be remembered that during the period in which these enhancements were effected, there had been three failures of crops—in 1865-66, 1868-69, and 1873-74—resulting in famines more or less acute. 'In Monghyr, the increase has been from Rs. 27,000 to Rs. 47,000. In Bhaugalpore, an even more objectionable system has been followed out. The Náridígár estate has been absolutely handed over to a European resident, an *indigo-planter*, who receives 10 per cent. on the collections. How far this gentleman is to blame for the fact, we do not venture to say; but the district officers report that in Náridígár, as in Alapore in Tirhoot, *the rates of rent are from* 200 *to* 300 *per cent. in excess of those current in neighbouring estates.* It was to be hoped that these exorbitant rents might be collected with, at least, seeming moderation. "Skilled European

supervision," as it is euphuistically called, has, however, found *violence and illegality its most convenient agents.* If a tenant or number of tenants in any village are in arrears, a few sturdy Rajpoots (the soldier caste) or, since a military element has been introduced into the management, a couple of Musalmán Sawárs (horsemen) are quartered on the village at harvest time, who prohibit the reaping of the crops on any part of the village lands till the arrear is paid up. *Thus, the provident and the slothful, the indebted and the solvent, are all grouped together, and ruined by this infamous practice.*'

The *Pioneer* describes how the Bombay ryot, unable to fly from the 'yoke of British misgovernment,' took refuge in murder and arson. The *Englishman* records facts hardly less discreditable in regard to Behar. 'The absconding of ryots,' it wrote, 'has become so notorious, that the police have been employed to register their flight. During the year 1874–75, in spite of splendid harvests, over 5,000 families have sought refuge from English injustice in the jungles of the Nepaulese Terai. It is calculated that these 5,000 households, thus abandoned, represent a total number of emigrants not less than 20,000.' These statements, far from being contradicted, were confirmed beyond question in every particular. A judicial officer, of tried ability, was deputed to inquire into the disorder, assisted by the chief magistrate of the Durbhunga district. His report, a lucid and able paper, is a noble testimony to that healthy independence of character that marks so many members of the Indian Civil Service. 'Quite apart,' he wrote, 'from the failure of the crop, in travelling there'—the Durbhunga property—'one had a feeling sometimes of *desolateness*, from the fewness of people to be met on the road, or to be seen on the maidáns (plains). The villages were few. We were so much struck with the scantiness of population that, in the absence of people enough to ask about it, we began speculating to ourselves as to the cause why old fields should have been abandoned, why good wastes should not have been

reclaimed.' Dr. Hunter's boast of jungle reclamation reads strangely beside this description of desolation in the heart of the fairest and most fruitful of Indian provinces: 'I have further to submit that the anxiety among the population of these estates, as I understood their feelings, was about impending ruin, rather than impending starvation. It is true they talked of famine and death; but this was, for the most part, but a prelude to the *invariable tale of oppression and rack-renting.* I watched them carefully—their expression, their demeanour, the subjects up to which they led the conversation—and the above was the conclusion that I came to.' I refrain from comment.

There is no doubt that the great Hutwa estate was similarly mismanaged. The available evidence, however, in regard to this fact is less complete. It is not, indeed, denied that the Court of Wards began its management in a fashion that is hardly credible. The last Maharaja died in the middle of the year 1871, having a few months before his death issued instructions to his servants to enhance his rental by 12½ per cent. during the ensuing year. Anything more illegal it would be difficult to imagine. Enhancement of rent without reference to the Civil Court is the worst evasion of our land law, and on the just exercise of the land law we depend more than on anything else for peace and prosperity in India. The enhancement was a large one, and fell on all—the well-to-do and poor—with equal haphazard injustice. The Maharaja died before his orders could be put in force; but, with a disregard of the law that is entirely inexplicable, the Court of Wards, supported by all the influence that governmental authority gives, proceeded immediately to exact from the ryots what the Maharaja could hardly have succeeded in realising in many years. The tenants began, as in Durbhunga, to abandon their homes almost *en masse*, flying to the feverish jungles of Gorakhpore and the Nepaulese Terai. The official manager admitted in 1872 that 'the sudden increase of rents in 1278

(A.D. 1871), following a bad season, led to ryots *absconding* in several villages;' but his proceedings had already set an example that the native landlords were not slow to follow. The chief magistrate of the district during the same year reported that 'the conduct of zemindars was *disgraceful in the extreme*, as may be gathered from the circumstance that after four years in which the crops had been periodically destroyed . . . . . the ryots were constantly pressed for payments; that they were cruelly and heartlessly treated, and that in some instances an *enhanced rental* was demanded and *realised* from them even at a time of such exceptional distress.' The fact remains that the Court of Wards, far from withdrawing this illegal demand, pressed for its payment till the famine finally proved the insanity of such proceedings.

There can be no doubt that during the five years before the disaster of 1874, rent enhancement in Behar was pressed on by the landlords in a manner never before attempted. Rents were increased, often doubled, in every direction without reference to the Civil Courts in precisely the illegal manner the Court of Wards had adopted. Not a few experienced officers in Behar make no secret of their opinion that the Court of Wards, by the active sanction and impulse it gave to the most condemnable kind of rent enhancement, did more to bring about and accentuate the sufferings of that wretched outburst of rack-rented misery, popularly known as the famine of 1874, than all the mischances of climate, drought, or inundation. It is unquestionable that the *foci* of that calamity were to be found at Durbhunga and Hutwa and the districts of Durbhunga and Sarun, in which they lie. All the evidence of that time—omitting the sensational and ill-informed—point to the existence of abundant stores of food in the country, but an entire depletion of the savings of the ryots, who, accordingly, when a slight failure of the crops occurred, had no resource but public charity.

In Behar, as in Bombay, the *local* officers have tried hard to

do their duty, but without success. The personal management of the Hutwa Maharaja has very lately been called in question. I have, however, no desire to hold up this zèmindar to special censure. It was his turn last year. Maharaja Sir Jai Mangal Singh, of Monghyr, was the object of severe animadversion the year before for similar reasons. In 1876 it was Raja Lilanand Singh, of Purneah, against whom the administration reports of the local officers most angrily fulminated. All these great landowners are in a way themselves the victims of the incredibly bad land system of Behar; and till that system is radically changed, it is our own administration of the country that must be the chief object of criticism and blame.

It will be asked, What interest can Government possibly have in permitting the landlords of Behar to continue in courses so patently mischievous? The answer is a very sad one to give—an answer that must shock the feelings of honourable Englishmen more, perhaps, than any disclosure that has yet been made in regard to the errors or failures of Indian government. The fact is that the most influential body of non-official Europeans in India lives and grows rich on this most evil land system, and that, acting through their official relatives, they have successfully resisted every attempt at reform. Indigo-manufacture depends on indigo-planting, and indigo-planting covers hundreds of thousands of acres with a crop that is ruin to the farmer to cultivate—hundreds of thousands of acres which are held under the worst form of the ruinous ticcadari lease. A large indigo concern ordinarily keeps in cultivation 2,000 to 5,000 acres scattered over twenty to fifty villages. This land is hardly ever held with any kind of proprietary right, but is obtained on short lease from zemindars, who, either from want of money or in order to avoid the responsibilities of management, make over not defined plots suitable for indigo-growing, but the whole village *en bloc*. The planter thus becomes a rent-speculator, and often pays a total rental for the village much in excess of what the zemindar has ever himself been able to collect. The

consequence is that not only the inherent evils of that system exist on European plantations as on the estates of native land-speculators, but many others, evincing the most unhappy features of a violent dominant race. In the words of the *Pioneer*—'Oppressive tenures are only the basis of an evil, complicated by a dozen illegalities and a score of noxious customs, involving every relation of landlord and tenant, master and labourer, manufacturer and factory-hand. Even the grudges of money-lender and borrower—sometimes of usurer and glebe-slave—have added bitterness to an industry which is indigenous to the country, and which, but for a perverse greed of wealth, would have developed into a source of riches that might stand beside, if not rival, the tobacco of America and the silk and tea of China. It would, perhaps, be impossible to point out any article of commerce which has been produced in more wholesale opposition to every economic rule. Each newly-arrived planter has seemed to have set himself to work to make a fortune within the least possible time, careless of the deluge of hatred—of justice, indeed—which would surely overtake his successors.'

Nor are these the only circumstances of mischief. Permit me to extract a portion of a report I lately addressed to the Bengal Government. 'I may be pardoned a short digression,' I wrote, 'in order to draw attention to a disgraceful feature in the relations of the large landed proprietors and indigo-planters of Behar. The latter are ever ready to appear before their official countrymen as apologists for zemindari oppression, whilst they also supply the landlords with the most certain means of bringing recalcitrant tenants to obedience. There is hardly any rent-enhancement to which the ryots will not submit rather than have their village made over in lease to an indigo-planter, and particularly to a planter who is believed to stand well with the officials, and to be on terms of intimacy with them. There is no circumstance more potent for evil in Behar than this unscrupulous conspiracy of greedy native landlords and able and influential European adventurers against the interests of an

already beggared tenantry.' At another time I wrote: 'Ryots dread, with a fear we hardly appreciate, the farming of their villages in lease to a factory, and the landlord constantly makes use of this very fear to extort higher rents. I do not make this statement because it is in itself probable; but I know *many* instances in which rents double of those previously paid were demanded, and in some cases were obtained, under the pressure of this threat.'

It was also my official duty in April of last year to draw up an official estimate of the pecuniary injury to the farmer compelled to cultivate indigo, which will aid you, my Lord, in judging of the urgency of this menace. When a village is obtained in lease, the first act of the planter is to appropriate to his own use one-fourth or one-fifth of the cultivated lands, and, in doing so, he invariably selects the best fields in the village. It is true that the rent is rateably reduced; but, even if the loss could be evenly divided, every tenant in the village must be mulcted at one blow in at least a fourth or fifth part of his income. Following the best authorities as to the average outturn and price of the ordinary crops of Behar, I arrived at the conclusion that Rs. 40 represented the normal value of the annual produce of an acre of fairly good land. This estimate has since been quoted with approval by Government. Taking the admitted area of indigo-cultivation in the district of Sarun, where I was then employed, at 50,000 acres, it appeared that the total sum illegally and most unjustly taken from the ryots by indigo-planters in this *one* district amounted to twenty lakhs of rupees—*an amount equal to the much-debated Customs duties on Manchester cotton goods remitted last year.* Looking at the subject from another point of view, I remarked at the time: 'That a small body of speculators should in this manner appropriate an amount of money exceeding the whole Government revenue of the district of every kind (including land-tax, excise, license-tax, and stamp revenue), is a very remarkable fact.' The total quantity of land cultivated in indigo in Behar is not less than 250,000

acres, representing a yearly drain of fully one million sterling on this province, and which is entirely derived from the profits of struggling farmers by a process that resembles an income-tax of twenty to twenty-five per cent., or of four to five shillings in the pound. I cannot believe that the English nation will allow this state of things to continue.

It rarely happens that the planter takes proportionately to the tenant's holding. The soil favourable to his industry is usually found in large plots that include several farms, whilst leaving others untouched. The entire ruin of individual farmers results; and, as emigration affords no haven of rest, starvation or the wretched life of a day labourer is their only resource. It can hardly be wondered at that the miserable tenant sometimes seeks a more summary end for his sorrows. The *Pioneer* of August 13, 1877, describes the slow ruin and tragic fate of such a farmer. I need only quote the first paragraph: 'One day last November, the subdivisional officer on tour chanced in the course of his morning ride upon a group of villagers standing by the side of a well, and in their midst the dead body of a man. Further inquiry showed that the man had drowned himself, *a victim to a reckless and a cruel system of indigo-cultivation*. Driven to despair at seeing himself quietly dispossessed, field after field, of the land which he had held for years, the unhappy wretch, after suffering long in silence, had found at length no other way of escape from the troubles which beset him.' The official papers in regard to this most pitiable suicide are even more outspoken. The planter guilty of the oppression that led to this tragedy was an honorary magistrate —a position equivalent to that of an English justice of the peace. His disregard of the law, however, was mild in comparison with the wholesale and insolent manifestations of contempt for authority in which indigo-planters occasionally indulge. Only two years ago a Government minute was issued declaring, in reference to a criminal trial just concluded, that 'the Lieutenant-Governor has read these papers with great regret,

as they disclose *a series of lawless and violent measures* adopted in regard to indigo and land disputes by a planter, on the one hand, who has hitherto borne a good name, and, on the other, by a wealthy zemindar of Tirhoot. On both sides armed parties were collected, both showed *an utter indifference to and contempt for the law*, and the result was one serious affray in which one man lost his life and several others were severely wounded; while a second affray was actually begun, but was fortunately stopped by the interference of the police. The whole of these occurrences are distinctly traceable to the faulty system under which indigo is grown in Tirhoot.' The planter had, in fact, attempted to hold violent possession of and cultivate lands his lease for which had expired. Sixteen leading native rioters were imprisoned for a long series of years; but the European 'principal, for whose benefit this scandalous outrage took place,' was passed over entirely unpunished. Similar leniency was extended to the landlord.

Sir Ashley Eden quite recognised the fact that the backbone of landlord oppression was to be found in the combined influence, ability, and violence of Europeans, and down to the end of 1877 he seemed quite as determined on reforming them as on bringing the landlords to their senses. At the same time the moderate spirit of his policy may be judged from the language of one of his earlier letters on the subject: 'I trust that the planters will understand that I really do desire to see nothing but a thorough rooting out of the evils which are involved in the present system of managing many of the factories; and that, this object being attained, I have every wish to see the cultivation of indigo in Behar maintained and protected.' It was in the same letter he wrote: 'No doubt the great curse of Behar is the ticcadari system; it is this mainly which makes the ryots of the richest province of Bengal the poorest and most wretched class we find in the country.' He clearly specified the reforms he demanded. 'The price paid for the raw indigo must be increased to an extent necessary to

make it worth the while of the ryot to grow it; the purchase of the crop must rest on an entirely commercial basis; the forcible seizure of ploughs, carts, and cattle, and generally the enforcement of labour, must cease; and, in fact, the ryot must become a free agent; and until this is all done, the necessity for the interference of Government will remain.' The Lieutenant-Governor, in fact, demanded the disappearance of a modified slavery. The source of his information was the accumulated accusations of the magistrates of Behar. A secretariat resolution declared that 'the attention of Government was especially drawn during the year to the abuses which had been allowed to grow up in connection with indigo-cultivation in Behar. A report submitted by the Commissioner of Patna conclusively showed that the system, as it existed, involved an amount of *lawlessness* and *oppression*, principally in the shape of *extorted* agreements to cultivate and of seizure of ploughs and cattle, which could not be tolerated.' The report of the Commissioner was founded on the reports of the district magistrate-collectors, all of which I hope soon to see laid on the table of the House of Commons.

I have referred to the relations of indigo-planters with the official class. They are admittedly of old standing—dating from the beginning of this century. To quote the *Pioneer*, the planters 'are for the most part the heirs on one side of an infamous system of landholding, which is purely of native development; and, on the other, of the violence and injustice which owe their parentage to the trading official, the "carpet-bagger" of the Honourable Company some eighty years ago. No fact is more clearly proved by the mildewed records of the Behar districts than that indigo was introduced by the medical servants of the Company, worked by the revenue officers, and bolstered up by official influence.' This discreditable state of things had nearly disappeared before the transfer of government to the Crown, but came to new life in consequence of the change in the manner of recruiting the governing service. With the

suppression of the old nomination system the higher class of officials lost the readiest means of providing for their sons, and were glad to find berths for them in any fairly respectable pursuit. Indigo-planting in those days was a very profitable speculation; and the best-known Indian official names, that for generations had filled the Government gazettes, began to appear more and more frequently in the lists of indigo-brokers, and side by side with well-established indigo trade-marks. The old civilians were also so narrowly unwise as to show that they bore little affection to the competition officers, whilst the latter often found in military circles a more congenial society. In fact, the ties of social life were rarely developed between them; and, the elder officers seeking alliances elsewhere, as many daughters as sons found homes in indigo-factories. These circumstances would be of little importance but that the senior officials used their influence to make the pleasant and healthy province of Behar a special preserve for themselves at the very time that the most intimate of their relatives and friends had become the instruments by which the oppression of the people was most vigorously and mercilessly carried out. Though the roll of the Haileybury non-competition officers contains many a name of note and honour, it is still an unhappy fact that the last territory that was almost exclusively in their hands to govern has been degraded to the wretched condition I have described, by means which it is charity to call perfunctory maladministration.

Since the close of the year 1877, denunciations on the part of the Bengal Government against ticcadari, landlord, and indigo oppression has substantially ceased. It is true that, towards the end of 1878, a Commission on the land question of Behar was appointed. Of its fifteen members, six were indigo-planters—men whose livelihood depended on the maintenance of the short-lease farming system—whilst its president, an official of position, was an indigo-planter's brother. It held a single session during the planters' race meeting at Sonepore; a report

was hastily drawn up, and things are precisely where they were ten years ago. There have been also, from time to time, rumours of remedial legislation; but the Supreme Government, with real conservative light-heartedness in the face of the gravest difficulties, has warned the Bengal Council that its interference with the existing land system of Behar should be 'the least radical possible;' in other words, nothing is to be done because nothing but thoroughly radical measures can induce reform.

The statement which I had to lay before you, my Lord, is now drawing to a close. As an official, I feel I have done no more than my duty. In India, every servant of the Crown is not only an official in the narrower sense of the word, bound by the rules of official subordination and reticence, but a trustee of the public honour. I have written under the sincere conviction that the condition of the great province of Behar, with its twenty millions of people, is a disgrace to the English name; and that, so strong are the interests involved in the continuance of that condition, nothing but the clearly pronounced expression of the will of Parliament can enforce amelioration.

I have the honour to remain, my Lord,

Your most obedient servant,

CHARLES JAMES O'DONNELL,

Justice of the Peace for the Provinces of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa.

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